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Auctori Plebis — But With No Authority Whatsoever

By

Eric P. Newman, A.N.A. No. 4624

A modern die struck forgery of the Auctori Plebis token dated 1787 has recently appeared in London. This is another of the modern deceptive counterfeits made primarily to appeal to American collectors. It is hoped that a prompt publication of the differences between the genuine coin and the counterfeit will prevent the further sale and distribution of this fake.

The genuine coin is an English halfpenny token, the designs, date, and legends of which were adapted from the 1787 Connecticut copper. The words of its legends *AUCTORI:* *PLEBIS:* and *INDEP:ET·LIBER* are even punctuated in the style used on the Connecticut issue. The reverse has a female figure seated on a chest, her hand on a globe, and an anchor leaning against the chest. There is a die break commonly found running from the seat of the female figure along the back of her left arm, through the top of her head to the top of the globe. The token is properly classified as an "evasion" halfpenny but is sometimes improperly referred to in Ameri-

Genuine above and forgery below, enlarged

ca as belonging in the "bungtown" halfpence category.

The forgery is easily distinguishable from the genuine on the obverse because each petal of the two lowest cinquefoil ornaments is cut separately into the die whereas in the genuine a single cinquefoil punch was used.

The forgery is readily distinguishable from the genuine on the reverse because the shank of the anchor connects with the center of the bottom of the shackle at the top end of the anchor, whereas in the genuine piece the shank of the anchor does not connect with the shackle and lines up far to the left of the center of the shackle. In other words, the anchor on the false piece is properly assembled while on the genuine token it is erroneous. On the spurious coin the chest on which the female figure is sitting is a thin line outlined on the field whereas on the genuine it is composed of solid panels.

The forgery, generally, is very crude in its die cutting compared to the detail on the original, but since dies for original 18th century tokens of this type were normally not cut to produce sharp impressions, one might be induced to wonder if the forgery was from an unknown pair of genuine dies. However, the false piece is intended to be identical to the genuine piece and it can be noted that even the abnormal gap between C and T in AUCTORI is present in both. The dies for the forgery seem to have been produced by impact after which the design was substantially strengthened by hand engraving.

David Q. Bowers kindly furnished the specimen of the spurious piece illustrated. As the title to this article indicates a coin originally struck with the implied "authority of the people," has now been copied without any respect for the authority of numismatic decency.

REPORT OF THE LIBRARIAN

We thank the many publishers who sent material for the library display table at the Cleveland convention. This numismatic material was enjoyed by many members and visitors. Thanks, also, to those who then donated this material to the library. The donors are: *Coin World, Numismatic News,* Seaby's, Alfred Szego, Hewitt Brothers, Lee Baker, Whitman Publishing Co., James L. Petshow, Twin City Publications, Bert Harsche, A. E. H. Petrie, Arlie Slabaugh, Ed Neuce and Clyde D. Mervis.

Harley L. Freeman has made a most generous donation to the A.N.A. archives. He donated a copy of *Confederate and State (Southern) Currency* by William West Bradbeer. This copy was autographed as a presentation gift to the author's wife on their 28th anniversary. Freeman also donated *United States Money Including Fractional Currency & Coinage* by George H. Blake. This was the personal record of Charles Markus, A.N.A. president in 1927, 1928 and 1929, and contains the list of bank notes in his collection.

We are always glad to receive donations of numismatic material of any kind. We can use *Coin Collectors Journals, Numismatic Circulars* and A.N.S. books. Needed also are some early issues of the director of the mint's annual reports. We thank the following for their donations: Otto Klima, Orders & Medals Society, Thomas C. Florich, Heinrich Pilartz, Oscar H. Dodson, John A. Tabor, Krause Publishing Co., E. J. Littrell, W. C. Hatcher, Dorthy Humitsch, Robert H. Pelletreau, Hugh E. McMillen, Sedgwick L. Moss, A. D. Craig, Fred Marckhoff, H. Deissinger, Herbert M. Bergen, W. D. Saylor, Elmer Nelson, L. R. Goodwin, Stephen M. Toth, Murari Ottorino, C. C. Shroyer, Irving V. Swalwell, F. J. Jeffery, Charles M. Johnson, C. B. Schmidt and H. J. Buehler.

For a list of the A.N.A. reprints and other numismatic material which the library has for sale, see pages 1035 and 1036 of *The Numismatist,* August issue, or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Librarian, P. O. Box 3011, Lincoln, Nebr. 68510.

Please add the following to your library catalog:

A-110 Asahi Newspaper Co., Japanese Mint Subsidiary Business Extension Div., Craig, Hayashi, Kim, Kozono. *Kahei No Rekishi (Money History of Japan).* Japanese picture book with English translation. About 700 illustrations. 1954-1964. Two vols., one in English, one in Japanese.

B-161 Bergen, Herbert M., Editor, *Club Bulletin.* "Suggestions for Making Numismatic Exhibits," 1964. (Exhibits, judging, rules, etc.)